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SUBJECT: ARMENIA'S TIP INTERIM ASSESSMENT

REF: A) STATE 176302 B) YEREVAN 1548 C) YEREVAN 1524  
D) YEREVAN 960 E) YEREVAN 895

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (SBU) Armenia has improved its record on four of the five interim assessment indicators provided to post by G/TIP. There have been no positive developments so far this year for the fifth indicator, "vigorously investigating and prosecuting officials for complicity in trafficking." However, we are aggressively pushing the GOAM to take seriously allegations of investigatorial misconduct (ref B) and hold out hope that they will do so before the end of the 2007 TIP reporting period. END SUMMARY.

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VICTIM ASSISTANCE AND REFERRAL TO SHELTERS  
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¶2. (SBU) Since March 1, the shelters operated by the UMCOR and Hope and Help NGOs have assisted more victims than they did during all of 2005. The shelters have assisted a total of 23 victims since March 1, including eight law-enforcement referrals. In 2005, the shelters assisted 17 victims, including 14 law-enforcement referrals.

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DEVELOPMENT OF VICTIM IDENTIFICATION AND REFERRAL PROCEDURES  
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¶3. (SBU) Armenia still lacks a national referral mechanism, however, the government has made some progress in promoting awareness of how to identify and help TIP victims. In June, the GOAM and the International Organization for Migration, aided by INL funds, published a manual for Armenian consular officers abroad, which contains guidelines for interviewing and repatriating TIP victims (ref E). UMCOR is currently working with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Health to publish two manuals for health and social workers that will outline assistance and referral procedures for TIP victims.

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AGGRESSIVE PROSECUTION AND SENTENCING OF TRAFFICKERS  
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¶4. (SBU) In July 2006, the government enacted a new statute, Article 132-1, and amended its old trafficking and pimping statutes to ensure that traffickers would be convicted under the trafficking statutes, and not the pimping statutes, which carry lesser penalties (ref D).

¶5. (SBU) Since March 1, 2006, Armenian law enforcement has investigated 14 cases under the new trafficking statutes.

Seven of the trafficking cases went to trial. Six defendants in four of the cases were convicted, and three cases, involving three defendants, are still in progress. During the 2005-06 reporting period (March 1, 2005, through February 28, 2006), 10 trafficking cases involving 16 defendants went to trial. By the end of the 2005-06 reporting period 14 defendants in nine of the cases had been convicted. The last case was still pending.

¶6. (SBU) Since March 1, 2006, Armenian law enforcement has investigated 21 cases under the pimping statutes. Nineteen of the pimping cases went to trial. Twenty-two defendants in 16 of the cases were convicted, and three cases, involving six defendants, are still in progress. During the 2005-06 reporting period, 18 cases involving 24 defendants went to trial, and all were convicted. (NOTE: Because the reporting period includes about four months before the introduction of the amendments to the trafficking and pimping statutes, some of the pimping cases that went to court before July could actually be trafficking cases. We have no way to know for certain. END NOTE.)

¶7. (SBU) Of those convicted in connection with both the trafficking and pimping cases, five were fined 200,000-500,000 AMD (between about 520-1320 USD), three were sentenced to six months to two years of corrective labor and a levy of 20 percent of their income, and 20 were sentenced to prison terms of 18 months to five years. For comparison, 100,000 AMD (260 USD) would be considered a very decent monthly wage in Armenia.

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VIGOROUS INVESTIGATION OF OFFICIAL COMPLICITY  
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¶8. (SBU) Armenia has made no detectable progress in this area to date. Earlier this summer, several alleged trafficking victims accused two investigators from the Prosecutor General's office of pressuring them to change their testimonies in connection with a trafficking case that later was downgraded to a lesser pimping charge. Though the Prosecutor General's office has not yet released the results of the investigation -- which several different sources have told us was cursory -- we understand no wrongdoing was found.

(COMMENT: We have pushed the GOAM hard on this issue in recent weeks, and hold out some hope for some more positive developments before the end of the reporting period. This is far from assured, however. END COMMENT.).

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TRAINING OF PROSECUTORS AND JUDGES  
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¶9. (SBU) Post brought a federal judge and DOJ prosecutor to Armenia in June to conduct training sessions for judges, police and prosecutors. The training sessions focused on victims' rights, witness protection and restitution, and also provided participants with a definition of trafficking, highlighting the differences between trafficking and economic migration. Twenty-seven judges (including every member of the criminal case chamber of Armenia's highest court), nine policemen and nine prosecutors attended the training sessions.  
GODFREY